

# Frequently Asked Questions: Postsecondary Achievement Reports State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Indicator (c)(12)

1. Why did the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) develop Postsecondary Achievement reports?
  - ❖ Postsecondary achievement reports satisfy a federal reporting requirement for State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) indicator (c)(12). In applying for funding under the SFSF Program of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Virginia (as the grantee) assured the United States Department of Education (USED) of compliance with all of the requirements for accountability, transparency, and reporting. One requirement of the SFSF program was to report information on high school graduates' postsecondary achievement outcomes after enrolling in public Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) in Virginia.
2. What information do postsecondary achievement reports provide about Virginia high school graduates who enrolled in a public IHE in Virginia?
  - ❖ Postsecondary achievement reports show the number and percent of Virginia high school graduates who enrolled in a Virginia public IHE within sixteen months of graduating high school **and** completed one year of college credit (applicable to a degree) within two years of their postsecondary enrollment date. Reports are available at the state, school division, and school level for all students and by student subgroups.
3. Which graduates are included in postsecondary achievement reports?
  - ❖ As required by the USED, postsecondary achievement reports include only Virginia graduates as defined for Virginia's Federal Graduation Indicator (FGI) who also enrolled in a public IHE in Virginia.
    - The FGI is calculated by following a group of students who started the ninth grade in the same school year; **and**
    - Includes students who earned Virginia's standard or advanced studies diplomas only; students who earned other Virginia Board of Education-approved diplomas are not counted as graduates in the FGI.

- Virginia is reporting postsecondary achievement based on cohorts of graduates. Students reported as graduating within four, five and six years of first entering ninth grade are included in the postsecondary achievement reports.
4. Which colleges and universities are included in the classification of a Virginia public IHE?
    - ❖ For a complete list of colleges and universities that meet the definition of a Virginia public IHE, please refer to guidance from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) available at:  
<http://www.schev.edu/students/PublicCollegeList.asp>.
  5. How did VDOE acquire data to produce postsecondary achievement reports?
    - ❖ VDOE entered into a data-sharing agreement with SCHEV to produce the best available estimates of postsecondary achievement outcomes for Virginia graduates who enrolled in a Virginia public IHE.
  6. What is SCHEV?
    - ❖ SCHEV is the Commonwealth's coordinating body for higher education.
    - ❖ As part of their responsibilities, SCHEV collects postsecondary enrollment and postsecondary achievement data from colleges and universities in Virginia while also maintaining the confidentiality of student records in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and state privacy laws.
    - ❖ Currently, SCHEV collects postsecondary enrollment and postsecondary achievement data from all of Virginia's public IHEs.
    - ❖ For more information please go to <http://schev.edu>
  7. How many credits equate to one year of college credit in a public IHE?
    - ❖ Thirty (30) units equates to one year of college credit.
  8. Did the summation of college credits earned originate from transcript-level records that included credits earned from passing Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school?
    - ❖ No. The calculations were based on identifying all the college courses a student passed in a two year time frame and adding the credits earned towards a degree for passing those courses. SCHEV and VDOE do not have access to students' official transcript data.

9. Were credits earned for passing developmental education courses included in the final summation of credits earned?
- ❖ No. Passing grades in developmental education courses are not applicable towards a degree and were excluded from the total amount of credits earned.
10. Were credits earned for passing dual enrollment courses while students were still in high school included in the final summation of credits earned?
- ❖ Yes. Postsecondary achievement reports show results with and without the dual enrollment credits included in the calculation.
11. The postsecondary achievement report has a column that states, “Credits earned could not be determined due to the presence of missing grades.” What does this mean?
- ❖ In some records, public IHE did not submit final course grades to SCHEV. Some of these missing grades would impact the determination of whether or not a student earned 30 or more credits within two years of enrolling in college.
  - ❖ The postsecondary achievement reports document the percentage of students for whom insufficient data were available to make a final determination about whether they met the criteria.
12. Are the data accurate counts and percentages of Virginia graduates postsecondary achievement in public Institutions of Higher Education in Virginia?
- ❖ The data represent the best available estimates at this time.
  - ❖ VDOE and SCHEV have determined that the best available estimates in the postsecondary achievement reports are likely underestimates of the actual numbers of students who meet these requirements. The percentages are consistent with other available estimates of students’ enrollment and achievement in the first year of college.
  - ❖ Both VDOE and SCHEV have independently concluded these reports identify no less than 85 percent of all Virginia graduates who enrolled in public IHE within sixteen months of high school graduation.
13. How often will the postsecondary achievement reports be updated?
- ❖ The data in the reports will be updated annually.

14. Why is there a long time-lag between the year students graduated from high school and the availability of a postsecondary achievement report?

- ❖ The following factors lead to the long time-lag between students' high school graduation year and the availability of the postsecondary achievement reports:
  - The federal reporting requirements include three years of data since high school graduation—up to one year for students to enroll in college and two years for students to have the opportunity to earn one-year's worth of college credits.
  - It takes additional time for SCHEV to collect the course enrollment and grades from Virginia's public IHEs that are used to produce the reports
  - The data linking and validation process is currently conducted manually, which takes additional time. In the future, this process is expected to be automated, that may reduce time to report production.

15. How did VDOE and SCHEV link data to produce postsecondary achievement reports in a secure manner?

- ❖ VDOE and SCHEV use different unique identifiers in their existing databases—VDOE uses the State Testing Identifier (STI) and SCHEV uses students' social security numbers (SSN). Using the STI and SSN, VDOE and SCHEV entered into a two-step encryption process to protect individual student identities during the data linking process. The encryption process ensures that VDOE and SCHEV do not share actual unique IDs (e.g., STI and SSN) or other personal information with the other agency. However, the process provides a mechanism to link the datasets, validate the merge process, and create the postsecondary achievement reports to meet the SFSF indicator (c)(12) requirements.

16. Where can I find more information about the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program?

- ❖ For more information about the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program visit:  
[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school\\_finance/arra/stabilization/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/arra/stabilization/index.shtml).